

Message Text

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62

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07

LAB-04 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-02 USIA-15

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7366

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION OECD PARIS

UNCLAS LONDON 00791

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK

SUBJECT: FLEET STREET BLACKOUT THREATENED

1. BEGIN SUMMARY - A DISPUTE OVER PAY DIFFERENTIALS BETWEEN PRINTERS AND PUBLISHERS OF MOST LONDON AND MANCHESTER NATIONAL AND EVENING NEWSPAPERS HAS RESULTED IN SPORADIC INDUSTRIAL ACTION, RESULTING IN SHORT PRESS RUNS OR NO DELIVERIES ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS RECENTLY. NOW, FOLLOWING A THREAT BY THE NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION (NPA) TO FIRE 7,000 MEMBERS OF A MAJOR PRINTING UNION, THE NATIONAL GRAPHICAL ASSOCIATION, IF INDUSTRIAL ACTION IS NOT CALLED OFF, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT FLEET STREET MAY SHUT DOWN COMPLETELY (UNLESS INTER-
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VENTION TODAY (JANUARY 17) BY THE EMPLOYMENT SECRETARY

MICHAEL FOOT IS SUCCESSFUL.) END SUMMARY

2. THE NGA IS ONE OF SIX PRINTING UNIONS IN THE INDUSTRY, AND IT HAS BEEN SEEKING TO PREVENT THE PUBLISHERS FROM NARROWING THE DIFFERENTIALS BETWEEN THEIR OWN MEMBERS AND OTHER NEWSPAPER WORKERS. THE FIVE OTHER PRINTING UNIONS, WHO TOGETHER WITH THE NGA, ORGANIZE 25,000 WORKERS IN LONDON AND MANCHESTER, WERE PREPARED TO ACCEPT A 6-2/3RD PERCENT WAGE HIKE, BUT THE NGA BALKED BECAUSE THIS WOULD HAVE ERODED DIFFERENTIALS BY AN ESTIMATED 40 PENCE (ABOUT 95 U.S. CENTS). THE NGA REPORTEDLY WOULD BE WILLING TO ACCEPT THE NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS' OFFER AS IT NOW STANDS BUT ONLY ON CONDITION THAT THE DIFFERENTIALS WILL BE REINSTATED BY OCTOBER 1ST WHEN THE AGREEMENT NOW BEING NEGOTIATED IS DUE TO EXPIRE.

3. MICHAEL FOOT, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT, IS PLANNING TO MEET TODAY WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH THE PUBLISHERS' ASSOCIATION AND THE SIX PRINTING UNIONS. THE NEW CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION SERVICE HAS BEEN TRYING TO RESOLVE THE DISPUTE, BUT SO FAR WITHOUT MUCH SUCCESS. SOME NGA MEMBERS HAVE, IN THE MEANWHILE, SOUGHT A HIGH COURT INJUNCTION TO PREVENT THE THREATENED LARGE-SCALE DISMISSALS.

4. IN LONDON, ALL OF THE NATIONAL AND EVENING NEWSPAPERS ARE MEMBERS OF THE NPA, EXCEPT "THE DAILY MIRROR" GROUP. HOWEVER, THE LATTER ALSO WAS FORCED TO SUSPEND PUBLICATION LAST NIGHT OF THE "MIRROR" AND ANOTHER OF ITS PUBLICATIONS, "SPORTING LIFE," BECAUSE OF A SEPARATE DISPUTE INVOLVING CLERICAL WORKERS.

5. THE DISPUTE COMES AT A TIME WHEN SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS ARE REPORTEDLY IN SERIOUS FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY. LORD GOODMAN, CHAIRMAN OF THE NPA, HAS DECLARED THAT THE INDUSTRY WAS "ON THE VERGE OF THE MOST SERIOUS STRIFE FOR YEARS, THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHICH WAS BEYOND PREDICTION." (ANOTHER QUESTION WHICH HAS EXERCISED PUBLISHERS IS THE REQUIREMENT UNDER CLOSED SHOP PROVISIONS OF PROPOSED NEW LABOR LEGISLATION THAT EDITORS MUST

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JOIN A UNION - TO BE DISCUSSED IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE.)

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Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
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Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Enclosure: n/a
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